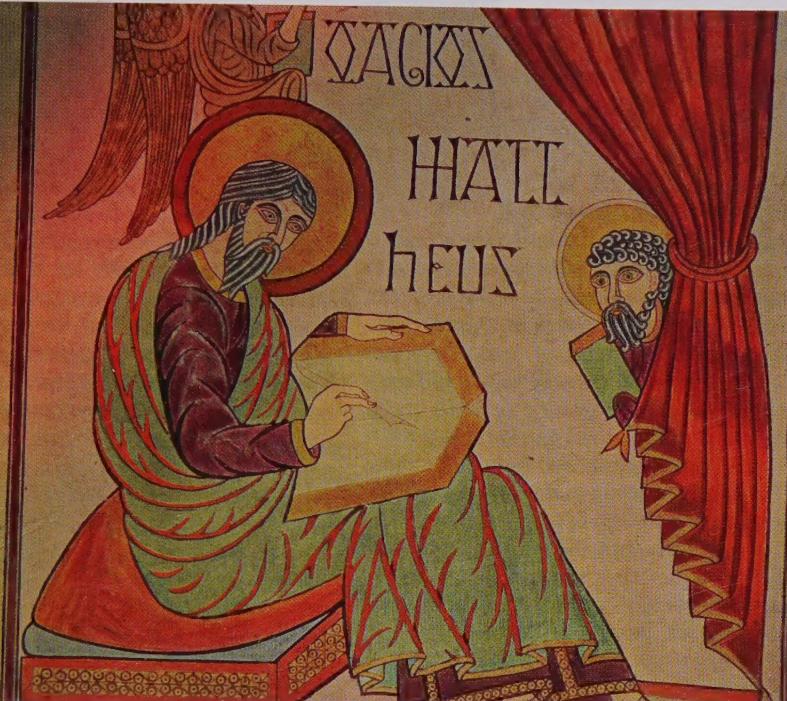


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St Matthew: from the Lindisfarne Gospels

One Lord, one gospel, one lectionary

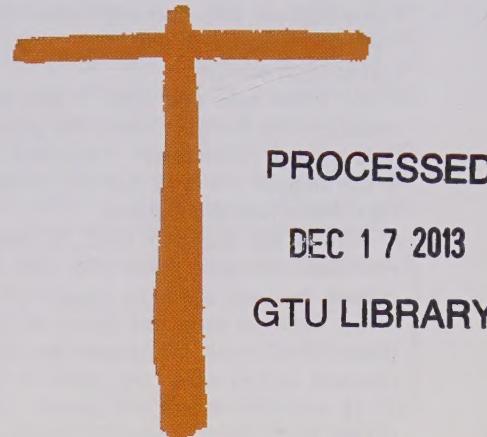
Thomas O'Loughlin

The opening lines of Luke's account of the central events of Christian faith do not strike one as being of great interest – certainly it would get a low score if submitted in a modern class in creative writing as neither grabbing the reader's attention nor conveying the kernel of the message in a sound-bite! But if we look closely at it, it may give us a key to understanding how we are to use his text, as well as those of Mark, Matthew, and John. Here it is:

Inasmuch as many have undertaken to compile a narrative of the things which have been accomplished among us, just as they were delivered to us ... it seemed good to me also, having followed all things closely for some time past, to write an orderly account for you ... (Lk 1:1-3).

There are two points to note in this. First, Luke does not use the word 'gospel' to describe his work – he calls it 'an orderly account.' Second, he takes it for granted that many have compiled such accounts. Now we know that Luke saw Mark's book, but had never seen Matthew's nor John's account (it was either written later or it circulated in a different network to those Luke knew). Therefore, the accounts he mentions must include many works in addition to those which have survived in our bibles. Why is this important?

Jesus's followers looked on him as 'the anointed of the Father;' he showed them a new way of discipleship and gave them the promise of the Father's love and forgiveness. Moreover, they had to come to terms with his death, and saw it as a sacrifice that established a new covenant – his followers



What's the Use of the Scriptures?

100,000 people visited Durham over the summer to view the Lindisfarne Gospels. But the community around St Cuthbert, like St Francis and the community around him, valued the Scriptures not merely as a historic document but as a life-giving means of encounter with Christ, the incarnate Word of God. Our contributors suggest how we can make better use of Scripture: in liturgy; in personal devotion; in inter-faith encounter; and as a source of authority in the faith we share as Anglican Christians.

One Lord, one gospel, one lectionary	1
Devotional use of the Bible	3
Scripture's depths through the eyes of other faiths	4
Anglicans and the Bible	6
Minister's Letter	7
The long term view	8
Community Routes	10
Franciscans in Doncaster	12
Book Reviews	14
Pilgrimage	15
Andrew SSF	16

were a new People of God – and offered them the promise of resurrection. In, with, and through Jesus his disciples had access to the Father, liberation, and new life. So decades before Luke wrote, Paul's people could produce this slogan expressing what made them distinctive:

There is one body and one Spirit, just as you were called to the one hope that belongs to your call, one Lord, one faith, one baptism, one God and Father of us all, who is above all and through all and in all (Eph 4:4-6).

So there was one Lord – and that message was the good news, the gospel. This is 'the announcement' – and note it is in the singular – it is all that we proclaim from Jesus and about Jesus.

This is 'the gospel of God', for which Paul was set apart (Rom 1:1), and 'the gospel' he was eager to preach (Rom 1:15). We must serve this 'gospel of God' (Rom 15:16), it is the gospel we have received and in which we stand (1 Cor 15:1), and there is only one gospel – that of the Christ (Gal 1:7). Jesus is the gospel of God and he preached the gospel of God (Mk 1:14), it is for the sake of the gospel that many have left all (Mk 10:29) and 'the gospel' must be 'preached to all nations' (Mk 13:10). The gospel is not a book but the whole message of God to humanity: we must hear it, rejoice in it, and proclaim it.

Just as there is one Lord, one faith, one baptism, so there is one gospel! So how

We do not read 'the gospel' – that is the whole revelation and it could not be contained in a book – but various preachers' attempts to put that revelation before us in an orderly way.

So we have to imagine the early communities being those who accepted that Jesus was the gospel, and who viewed themselves as the people of the gospel revealed in his words, deeds, life, death, and his risen presence among them! How were they to get a grasp on this gospel? Through listening to those teachers who made it their special task to try to capture it in an orderly way. These got the name of 'gospellers' (in Greek form: 'evangelists'). Since this was a special skill, not every church (a group of around 100 people) would have such a teacher: so they travelled from community to community giving performances of their accounts and leaving 'recordings' on papyrus such that they could be heard again later or (in the case of the most famous evangelists) in places they could not visit in person. Several of these 'recordings' have survived: Mark, Thomas (discovered in 1946), Matthew, 'Q', Peter (discovered in 1886), John, Luke, but most have perished – and only four remained in constant and universal use in the churches.

Because these 'orderly accounts' of 'the gospel' were performed by 'gospellers' we let our language play us false and called the accounts 'gospels' without realising that such a plural is theological nonsense! Just as there is one Lord, so there can be only one gospel – but we need many accounts to help us grasp it! Having succumbed to the error of having four 'gospels,' we not only forgot the others that were in circulation, but we then tried to recombine the four into a single story! We even had special systems to help us ignore the differences between them. Thereby we lost the richness that only a variety of perspectives can bring – recalling that the one gospel will always be a mystery greater than any number of accounts (much less one 'smoothed out' version which boiled down four accounts into one).

To redress well over 1600 years of such laziness, the Catholic Church created a new lectionary in 1969 with each evangelist's perspective heard distinctly. Matthew was to be read one year, then Mark, then Luke, with John read at special times. They are laid out so that over three years we get different

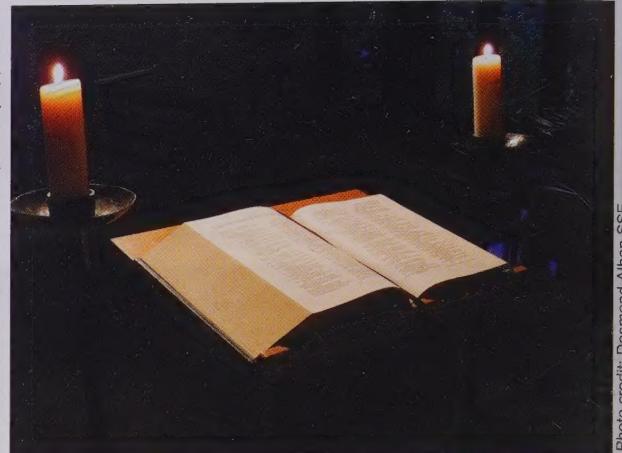
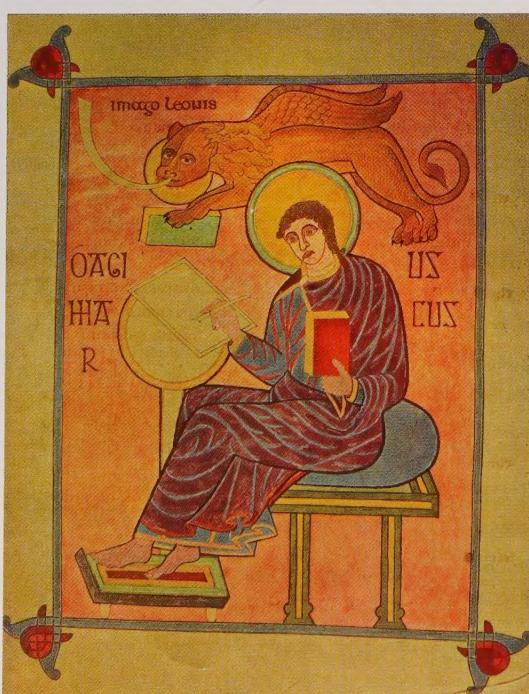


Photo credit: Desmond Alban SSF

perspectives on Jesus and hear three distinct accounts of the one gospel. So, imagine this, in 1973 for the first time anywhere since the second century there were large portions of Mark's account read and used as the basis for preaching! The idea was so good that it was soon being studied by other western churches (sadly the eastern churches are not yet alive to the problem), and experiments were being made that resulted in many Protestant churches adopting a similar arrangement (now called the *Revised Common Lectionary*) – or even adopting a lectionary for the first time. And, year by year, this plan is being taken up by others: the Church of England, for example, adopted it in 1998. Not only is this lectionary a magnificent remedy to allow us to hear these orderly accounts more effectively, but it is a great ecumenical event drawing us all closer to 'the gospel.' Amazingly, most worshippers, even preachers, are virtually unaware of these developments.

Further Reading

The Reims Statement: Praying with one voice www.englishtexts.org/reims.pdf
Thomas O'Loughlin, *Making the Most of the Lectionary: A User's Guide* (London 2012) - see review on page 14. f



Saint Mark: from the Lindisfarne Gospels

did we end up with four in our bibles? The answer lies in lazy reading and slovenly use of language! If we pay careful attention we notice that it is 'the gospel according to Mark' or one of the others.

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The Reverend Professor Tom O'Loughlin is Professor of Historical Theology in the University of Nottingham. He has taken part in various Franciscan formation events over the years.

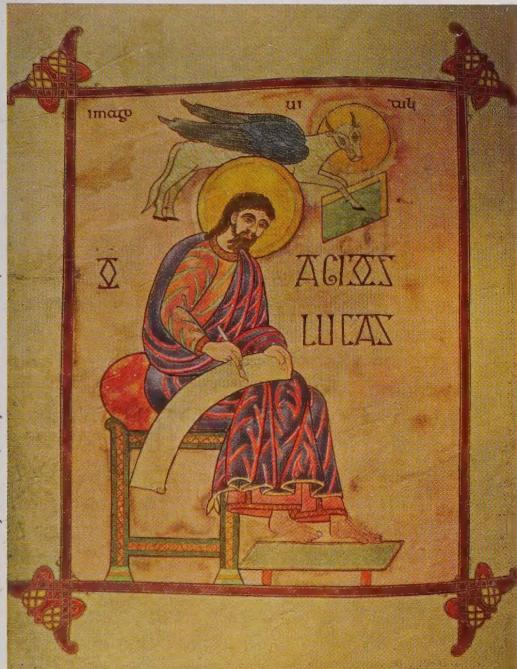
Devotional use of the Bible

Jane Williams



The Bible, like the Church, is a gift of God. Like the Church, one of its many properties is that it makes it much harder for us to make God in our own image. Much as we would like to construct a divine being whose likes and dislikes matched ours, whose priorities were what we would like and who liked the people we liked and, perhaps even more importantly, hated our enemies, the Bible brings us into salutary contact with another reality. This book, or library of books, is full of strange ideas, situations and people; it cannot be shaped by us, but instead invites us to step into its world, rather than trying to make it part of ours. It forms us as we read.

So the first thing a devotional use of the Bible needs to attempt to do is to put down the desire to treat the Bible as our tool. What we are searching for as we read the Bible is the humility to allow ourselves to be addressed by God, rather than demanding answers to our questions.



Saint Luke: from the Lindisfarne Gospels

For most of its history, the Bible has been read aloud, in community. Its many different books have survived, humanly speaking, because they built and rebuilt, admonished, renewed, inspired, encouraged and taught the groups of people who heard them. Imagine the tiny Christian community in Colossae, gathered together, perhaps in someone's home, perhaps outside, very early in the morning, while one of the literate members of this odd, insignificant group read to them about how their faith was known all over the world. How precious must this letter have been for them to copy it over and over again, handing it on to succeeding generations, until we, too, can read of the reconciling work of God in Christ.

At the Lambeth Conference in 2008, when bishops and their spouses from the

Anglican Church all over the world came together in Canterbury, they used a method of Bible study that was pioneered in parts of Africa where literacy is low and where books are scarce. So the primary resource available for Bible study was the group of people gathered around the Word. For those of us with a theological education, it was painfully hard to lay aside all the armoury of scholarly equipment we usually bring to the text – what does the Greek actually say, to whom was the passage originally written, what is the best exegesis of this passage – and learn how the words were heard by others in the group, what resonances they had in people's lives, how people tried to live in response to what they heard. It was a humbling and enlightening experience to encounter the power of the Bible to speak, at all times, and to all people.

Reading the Bible in company is a devotional practice that has been taken for granted, then, for most of Christian history, and there are all kinds of helpful traditions for doing it. One of the most ancient and simple is Lectio Divina, with its superb combination of respectful attention to the text, openness to the Holy Spirit, and opportunity to learn from each other. Lectio is not seeking information or answers, but is allowing God to speak into our noisy, demanding hearts and minds. Very often, after a period of Lectio, a word or phrase from the passage of scripture will have lodged in our memory, and can go on feeding us.

So simple attentiveness to the Bible is one aid to devotional reading, as is reading with others. But there is also a place for intellectual hard work on the text. Some parts of the Bible are hard to understand, and some parts, that seem deceptively simple, actually have hidden depths. When you realise, for example, that the story of Martha and Mary is not so much a commendation of the contemplative life in opposition to the active life, but an offer to women of the chance to learn at the feet of Jesus and not just cook his dinner, then the text is

speaking in new and liberating ways. But unless we realise that women did not sit at the feet of rabbis to learn, we do not see how breath-taking is the picture of Mary, the disciple.

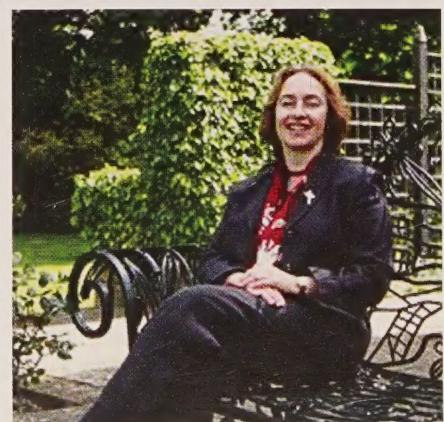
It is also a good idea occasionally to compare translations of the Bible. We all have our favourites, and can be quite taken aback to realise that translators have to make intelligent and prayerful choices about their use of words. They have to make informed judgements about what is the likely meaning of a Greek or Hebrew phrase, so it can be helpful to get some idea of the range of possibilities.

Working at the text in this way can be really helpful to bring us up hard against the reality of the diversity of people who

All human life, all human emotion, is here, and apparently none of it is alien to God.

call this book scripture. Its pages are full of human beings of every kind, good, bad, indifferent, powerful, rich, poor, old, young, God-fearing and God-despising. All human life, all human emotion, is here, and apparently none of it is alien to God. God has seen it all and not gone home in disgust. As we work to understand the history, the poetry, the sayings, the stories, we are drawn deeper into our own motivation, too.

Through it all, there is God. I Timothy 3.16 says that all scripture is inspired by, or breathed by, God. That phrase has been interpreted in many and various ways over the centuries, but at the heart of it is the truth witnessed to by all who come with humble and fervent hearts, that the Bible is full of the life-giving breath of God. Commentaries on it fill libraries, and readers, hearers, preachers of it fill continents and centuries. This one, compact volume has done and continues to do just what God intends it for, which is to draw its users into an ongoing relationship, across time and space, with each other and God. f



Jane Williams is a Tutor in Theology at St Mellitus College, and the author of books, including *Lectio* and *Reflections for Years A, B and C*.

Scripture's depths through the eyes of other faiths

Simeon Zahl



ot long ago I found myself in a conference room at the University of Cambridge engaging in a spirited discussion of a beloved scriptural text. The text was Genesis chapter 45, the climax of the story of Joseph, sold into slavery by his brothers but now Pharaoh's right hand in Egypt, with power to feed his starving family. Face-to-face with the perpetrators of the great tragedy of his life, Joseph reveals himself as their brother and tells them: 'it was not you who sent me here but God.' Every Christian knows this story, and knows its power as a sort of theodicy, a story that helps us to understand how God in His wisdom and power is able to redeem evil events in human lives and in history and use them for His greater purposes. As Joseph puts it a little later on, 'Even though you intended to do harm to me, God intended it for good' (Gen. 50:20).

Why then was our little Cambridge group in vigorous disagreement about the meaning of the text? What was unusual about this particular Scripture study group is that it was not just Christians who were participating: a third of the group were Jewish, and another third were Muslim. We were engaging in a practice known as 'Scriptural Reasoning' (SR), in which members of the three Abrahamic religions gather together to discuss each other's

those from without one's own tradition. So, for example, through the discussion I get the chance to learn about a Qur'anic text from a practising Muslim, and they get to see what their text looks like to a Christian like me.

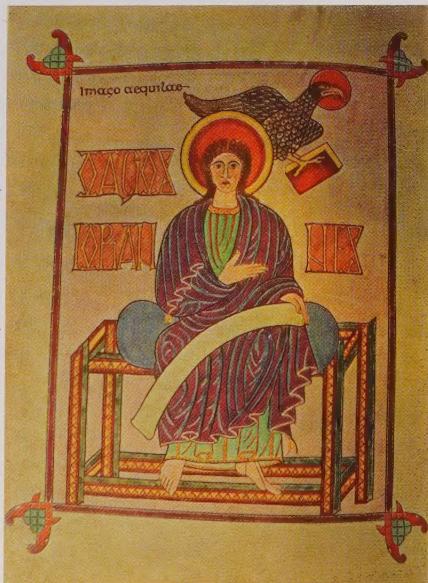
Returning to Joseph and his brothers, I had just been explaining to the group the power the Genesis text had always held for me as a way of seeing God's providence at work in the world, when my friend Adam, who is Jewish, started shaking his head. 'Isn't that interpretation a bit naïve?' he asked. He argued that the key verse here is in fact 45:2, where Pharaoh's household hears Joseph weeping. In Adam's interpretation, this is where the Egyptians realize that Joseph is not one of them after all, that he has loyalties to people outside of Egypt and therefore can no longer be trusted. Adam pointed out that when we next pick up the story the Jews in Egypt have gone from being invited guests to Egyptian slaves. Joseph may think God is doing all this for good but he is wrong - coming to Egypt was one of the worst things that happened to the Jewish people in the Bible. Joseph was too trusting, and his whole people suffered as a result. Joseph's claim about God's intentions in the episodes tells us a lot more about Joseph than it does about God.

I was floored by this interpretation. On the one hand, it had never once occurred to me not to take Joseph's statement about God's plan at face value. On the other hand, even if in the end I still interpret the passage as a theodicy, Adam's interpretation was surprisingly plausible, and I realized that as a Christian I had never really taken the period of slavery in Egypt seriously enough as a large-scale human tragedy – it had always been just one unfortunate episode, long past, in the great journey of salvation history that would later culminate in Jesus. Adam had grown up with this text just as I had, but our different contexts and traditions had led us to completely different interpretations – and, as a member of a tradition that had a long

history of suffering and abuse at the hands of those in power, his had particular weight.

This episode reveals some of the key strengths of Scriptural Reasoning as a mode of inter-faith dialogue. First, by using Scripture study as the central structure for encounter between members of these three faiths, participants do not have to shelve their own personal faith before participating. What is very often most interesting to one's colleagues in SR is how the text really matters to you personally and religiously – as a practising Jew, Christian, or Muslim. What unites participants is not agreement about the meanings of texts, but the fact that, as religious people, in our own different ways we take these texts extremely seriously and have been shaped by them throughout our lives. Adam and I both felt very strongly and personally about Genesis 45, even as we disagreed about its meaning, and recognizing this in each other fostered immediate religious respect (and soon, friendship), even as it helped us also see how deeply our interpretations of the texts had been shaped by our own specific religious backgrounds and histories.

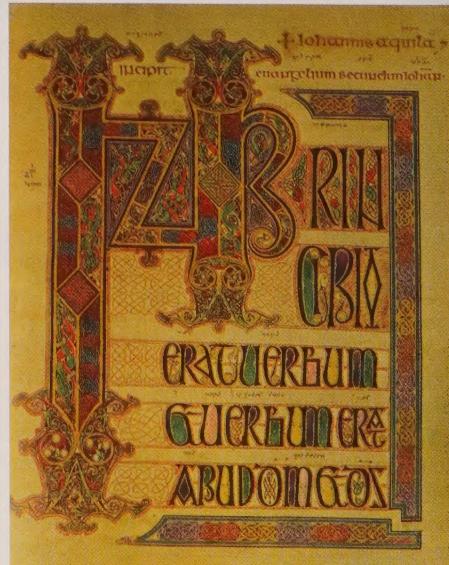
A second great strength of Scriptural Reasoning illustrated here is how it thrives upon disagreement. Too often in inter-faith dialogue, there is an idea that explicit engagement with deep and abiding disagreements between the religions – whether about God, the world, eternal life, ethics, or salvation – is dangerous and could shipwreck the whole enterprise. Better to stay on the 'safe' ground like ethics of love and compassion and hospitality. The danger of such approaches is that the engagement can be superficial, never really engaging honestly with the deep passions and inner



Facsimile in St Mary's Church, Holy Island. Used with permission

St John: from the Lindisfarne Gospels

Scriptures – Hebrew Bible/Old Testament, New Testament, and the Qur'an. There is no agenda in this practice other than to see where the discussion leads and to get to know the texts, each other, and each other's traditions better in the process. Judaism, Islam, and Christianity are each in their own way deeply oriented around central scriptural texts. By bringing texts from all three traditions together, what is ensured for all participants is a heady mix of the strange and the deeply familiar. SR gives the opportunity for participants from each tradition not only to learn about the others' texts from those who know the texts 'from the inside', but also to learn about their own texts by seeing how they appear to



St John: Initial page, from the Lindisfarne Gospels
Continued on page 5

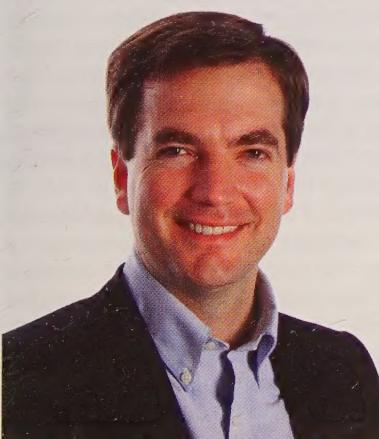
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Continued from page 4

motors of Judaism, Christianity, or Islam. SR, by contrast, thrives on discussion, including disagreement, so long as basic respect is maintained. As Adam and I found, far more is accomplished through an hour of heated, honest, face-to-face discussion of a valued text than would be through an hour of bland inter-religious platitudes. As different participants have put it over the years, the goal of Scriptural Reasoning is 'understanding, not agreement', and to 'improve the quality of our disagreements.'

The practice of Scriptural Reasoning grew in the 1990s out of a practice of Tanakh and Talmud study among Jewish philosophers known as 'Textual Reasoning.' The earliest founders and participants were academics – including Peter Ochs at the University of Virginia and David Ford at Cambridge – but the practice has long since spread beyond the confines of the academy, from London to Ontario, Jerusalem to Beijing. Its success is due to many factors, including not least its appeal to those who wish to engage with other faiths without checking their own faith at the door, and its ability to foster community and respect across traditions without requiring consensus. But a final great asset is its long-term sustainability, whose fruit is friendship. Because the texts contain such depths of meaning, and can change with every session, SR groups are able to meet regularly over months and even years, and this often produces lifelong friendships across traditions. SR orients inter-religious dialogue around the encounter of a small group of people with their Scriptural texts, and in doing so it not only deepens understanding, it also gives a face to religions outside of our own. In a world full of religious conflict, ignorance, and misunderstanding, this is a valuable asset indeed.

To learn more about Scriptural Reasoning and to find out how to participate, see the SR website at www.scripturalreasoning.org. *f*



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A note from the editor

Several people contacted me regarding the articles in the September 2013 edition of *franciscan*, with the theme, 'Christians in the Land of the Holy One'. As the title indicates, we were not attempting to write about the political situation in general, which is complicated and subject to change, but about living as a Christian in the Holy Land. The editorial team understood that a significant number of Christians who are there permanently, are Palestinians, and our contacts pointed us to Palestinians. The presence of Jewish Christians in Israel was indicated by the Hebrew version of the Lord's Prayer on page 16, and the centrefold pictures indicating the Franciscan presence in association with holy sites and with hosting pilgrims. Naim Ateek's article noted Hebrew speaking Christians in Israel, and Clark Berge's article hinted at the tension that is part of daily life in Israel for people of all faiths.

A visit to TSSF in Sweden

As a follow-on to the article in the May 2013 edition of *franciscan*, **David n/SSF** and **Micael Christoffer n/SSF** write about their visit to Sweden in August 2013.

We met with Third Order groups in five different places in the country, which entailed a considerable amount of travel. The reasons for the visit were to encourage the growing number of tertiaries in Sweden, to try to establish better contact between Franciscans in Sweden and in the UK, and to see how we, the two Swedish novices in particular, could be of help to the tertiaries in Sweden.

We stayed with tertiaries throughout Sweden. We told those we met about our lives as Franciscans in the UK, and they asked us many questions, which we did our best to answer.

We started our journey with tertiaries in the Göteborg local group, meeting them one afternoon at the Franciscan sisters' convent in Sjövik outside Göteborg. The meeting concluded with us all singing Vespers together in the sisters' newly-built chapel.

We went on to meet the tertiaries in the Linköping local group, and included a trip to the beautiful cathedral in Linköping. From there, we went on to Stockholm, the capital of Sweden, where we met some of the tertiaries for a morning Eucharist at a beautiful parish church in central Stockholm, where the tertiaries are responsible for morning prayer once a week.

After spending some time in Stockholm we carried on north to the Uppsala region, where we met some tertiaries of that area after attending the Sunday High Mass at a local church in Uppsala. During church coffee, which is close to a sacrament in the Church of Sweden, we were also able to talk to the local parish about the First and Third Order,

Then we went even further north to Rättvik and to Berget, which is a retreat and meditation house in the Church of Sweden. The former Fr Hugh SSF played a part in the foundation of Berget in the 1960s. At Berget we met the warden, who is also a tertiary, and the rest of the ecumenical community that lives there, The Community of the Holy Trinity. This community aims to be a sign of Church unity. One of the members is a Roman Catholic Dominican sister.

All the tertiaries showed a truly Franciscan and loving hospitality to us, and were very encouraging and supportive of us as Swedish novices, and they hoped that the relationship we have between the Franciscans in Sweden and in the UK will become more fruitful over the coming years. *f*

Anglicans and the Bible

Alan Bartlett



Should Anglicans (Anglian Franciscans) be fundamentalists? Our instinctive answer is 'No'. Mainly because 'fundamentalist' has such negative connotations but also because most Anglicans would never consider themselves to be fundamentalist, not least when it comes to the Bible. But how often do we reflect on why that is the case or what continuing authority the Bible should have for Anglicans?

It is a peculiarly sharp question for those who honour Francis because he was in some ways a fundamentalist. Whilst cautious of book learning, he was immersed in the scriptures and of course the story of his call reveals his fundamentalist obedience to Jesus speaking through a couple of Bible passages. Yet he was not a fundamentalist in our modern sense because this faith in God speaking through scripture was held within a deep if not uncritical faith in God working through the Church. We are at risk of dangerous anachronisms here because Francis' world, just as Jesus' world, was so different from ours in terms of knowledge and perspectives. But the question about how we should relate to the Bible is peculiarly pressing for modern Anglicans, not least because the whole concept of a 'holy book' has become tainted.

Anglicans believed and believe in the primacy of scripture. Article 6 (of the Thirty-Nine) says that 'Scripture contains all things necessary to salvation'. If the Bible was all we had, the Reformers believed, it would lead us to Christ and salvation. In that sense Anglicans believe in *sola scriptura* (the Bible alone). This remains the Anglican position. Both in the Lambeth Quadrilateral and in the Declaration of Assent, the primary authority of scripture is asserted. So in the Declaration of Assent, the faith is 'revealed' in scripture whereas it is 'set forth' in the Creeds and our formularies only 'bear witness' to the Faith.

But Reformation Anglicans were also committed to another Latin tag, which has had profound consequences for Anglican life and theology. The Classic Anglican understanding of biblical authority was

generously permissive – anything can be done which is not obviously contrary to Scripture. The opposite view was found in some Reformed perspectives – only that can be done which is explicitly commanded in the Bible. So, for example, some Protestants destroyed their church organs because organs are not mentioned in the Bible. Anglicans didn't. Rather they believed that in terms of salvation, and the Bible, there were matters which were *adiaphora*; unspecified or indifferent or optional. How the Church should be ordered, or what the clergy should wear, were two examples found in Richard Hooker, Elizabeth I's greatest theologian; though we must note that the Elizabethan Church did give clear if not fundamentalist answers to both issues!

Reformation Anglicans were already handling scripture within the triangle of Scripture, Reason and Tradition: we read the Bible with our minds fully alert and also guided by the mind of the Church, not least in the discernment of the Canon. But this does not quite answer the question of authority.

Richard Hooker, in his debates with the 'Puritans' in his *Laws of Ecclesiastical Polity* reflected on the nature of biblical authority. He noticed how much of the Bible was already subject to 'interpretation'. So, great chunks of the Old Testament, whilst given as 'the Word of the Lord', were deemed no longer relevant. The deep question was whether a particular command was temporary or 'supernatural', i.e. permanent. And this decision had to be discerned from an overall reading of scripture not just by reading one text. In the midst of the ferocious Reformation disputes, Hooker took his readers back to essentials. The most important sentence in Hooker about Scripture is: 'The main drift of the whole New Testament is that which St John setteth down as the purpose of his own history: "These things are written, that ye might believe that Jesus is Christ the Son of God, and that in believing ye might have life through his name". (John 20:31)

The purpose of Scripture is

to take us to faith in Christ, not to answer all our questions. For that God has given us minds and the Church. In this next quotation, note how central are the beliefs which Hooker believed had been reasoned by the Church from the Bible, not simply given: 'For our belief in the Trinity, the co-eternity of the Son of God with his Father, the proceeding of the Spirit from the Father and the Son... these with such other principal points, the necessity whereof is by none denied, are notwithstanding in Scripture no where to be found by express literal mention, only deduced they are out of Scripture by collection.' In other words, we are back to the great triad of Scripture, Reason and Tradition. All three are essential to good hermeneutics.

A modern scholar of Anglican views on Scripture, Greer, sums up the Classic Anglican attitude to the Bible with perfect 'balance': 'What we have is God's divine law for salvation revealed in scripture and interpreted by our fallible reason. The Church of England [stood] in the middle ground between Rome's belief in the insufficiency of scripture and the Puritan view of its omnicompetence. Hooker has no wish to supplant an ecclesiastical infallibility with a biblicism that would

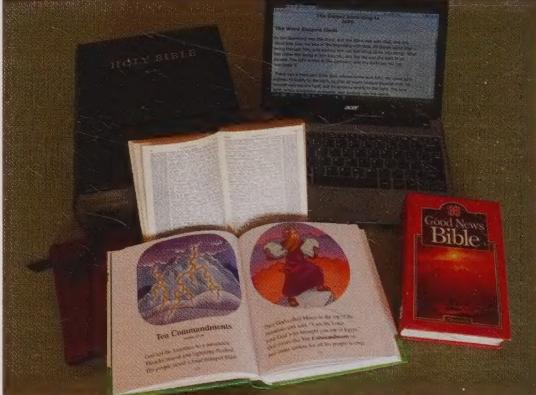


Photo: Desmond Alban SSF

make our interpretations of scripture infallible.' (*Anglican Scripture*, p.30) This is why Anglicans are always wrestling with the Bible.

But are we just stuck in debate? No. A little example: we had a gifted Nigerian Anglican priest in College writing a thesis on the 'household codes' at the end of the Pauline Epistles. He was especially looking at the teaching about the roles of men and women in marriage and family. He finished his study by telling us that, in his context, if this teaching was adopted it would radically improve the treatment of women. He then asked a wider question about how we were to understand the purpose of these texts? Were they intended to provide a 'law for all time' (one of Hooker's 'supernatural laws') or were they, especially in the light of the life and teaching of Jesus, to be seen as contextual and instrumental pieces of teaching by Paul? Their purpose was precisely to improve the treatment of women by men in these Christian communities at that time but that



Alan Bartlett with the ministry team on the occasion of the visit of the Archbishop of Canterbury.

Minister's Letter

**Sister Sue, Minister Provincial of the First Order Sisters
in the European Province, writes:**

Dear Friends,

As a participant in the Ministers' Meetings last August I gained an overview of the life of C/SSF in nine different countries. We all know that First Order sisters and brothers are living in Australia, Brazil, New Zealand, Papua New Guinea, the Solomon Islands, South Korea, Sri Lanka, the UK, and the USA. However meeting with the other ministers, and hearing first hand of the ups and downs of community life around the world, sharpened my awareness of both our fragility and the quite remarkable extent of our influence.

A total of around 170 brothers and sisters are living mostly in quite small community groups, spread around four continents, and carrying forward a very wide range of ministries. With all this ministry on-going it is easy for us to become very strongly focussed on what we do. A person's sense of identity can become closely tied to a particular ministry, or community house, which makes it difficult to be open to God's call in relation to new needs and opportunities.

Yet our primary calling is not to a particular place or job, important though our ministries undoubtedly are. Our primary calling as First Order Franciscans is to living the gospel, normally in community with our sisters and brothers, in a life shaped by our vows of poverty, chastity and obedience.

Continued from page 6

hermeneutically this teaching sat on top of a much bigger biblical trajectory, which was about the flourishing of women (and men) in God; and that trajectory had a much more radical and open-ended agenda. Indeed it has, arguably, only come to fruition with the (ongoing) liberation of women in the last 150 years. To amend the little bracelet slogan, good Anglican hermeneutics are: 'WWJDN – what would Jesus do now?'

Further Reading

- A. Bartlett *A Passionate Balance* (DLT 2007).
- A. Bartlett *Humane Christianity* (DLT 2004)
- R. Greer *Anglican Approaches to Scripture* (Herder and Herder 2006).
- N.T. Wright *Scripture and the Authority of God* (SPCK 2005).

Alan Bartlett is the vicar of St Giles, Durham; P-in-C of Sherburn and Shadforth; and Cranmer Visiting Fellow in Anglicanism at St John's College, Durham.

In our early twenty-first century society, life vows are extremely counter cultural. Serial relationships are common, contracts of employment tend to be short-term, and even replies to a social invitation are often very last minute! People want to be free to respond in the moment. Ours is indeed the 'now' generation. Timothy Radcliffe O.P. in his book *I Call You Friends* has very helpful insights on vows in his chapter 'Making Promises Till Death'.

In order for life vows to make sense we need to be aware of an on-going personal identity, a self which continues through the years; so regular reflection on our life journey, owning and pondering our own story is important. If we see ourselves only as people of this moment, defined completely by our current circumstances and experience, then any period of difficulty in our life, any challenge to our vocation, will appear catastrophic, as we will lack a vital awareness of the longer-term reality of our own story, and the deep connection to Jesus' story and the Franciscan tradition.

Sadly it does happen occasionally that a particular vocation has died and a sister or brother genuinely needs to be released from vows which no longer express the deep reality of that person's life in God. However such a decision needs to be very carefully discerned by the individual and the community over a significant period of time, and would involve prolonged prayerful reflection on the person's whole life story and



changing experience of God's call. We need to nourish the roots of our life in God, and be encouraged in our Franciscan calling. In making vows we exercise a precious ability given uniquely to human beings made in the image of God whose every promise is a 'Yes' in Jesus Christ (2 Corinthians 1:20). By daring to make vows and keep them we show God to the world.

As sisters and brothers we are sometimes reminded that our influence under God runs far deeper and wider than we normally realise, few and fragile as we are. By our joyful and faithful living in the vowed life to which we are called, we are signs of the reality of God who is generous and trustworthy, in whom people can hope, even in the darkest times.

May the Lord give you peace.

Sue CSF

Theme Prayer

**Eternal Word,
Moved, and imbued with breath and fire,
their wills set aside,
Men and women gave utterance in human
tongues.
And papyrus, calf-skin, paper, plasma screen,
the speech in the assembly,
Became carriers of your presence in the world.
Move us, too, imbue us with breath and fire,
That all that you utter, as the utterance
promises,
May never return to you empty.**

Amen

Two 'interviewers' spoke to four of our elders in C/SSF. But they had slightly different questions, so the questions are printed along with the responses.

Br Vincent SSF



What drew you to become a Franciscan Friar?

A Canadian tertiary of the Order of St Francis visited our church in Leighton Buzzard and as a result, I became an OSF tertiary. When the Canadian moved to St Peter's London Docks, I joined him, as we hoped to open a TOSF community house. But I read about SSF and its work in Cable Street, so I visited it, and thus began the opening up of a vocation leading to me joining SSF at Hilfield in 1954. More generally, the Franciscan vision of being alongside the poor in Christian service.

What are two high points of your life in the First Order?

Living at Hilfield and knowing Algy and Douglas – their vision, each needing the other to put it into effect, was a big influence on me.

Being Guardian of the house in Llandudno, from the mid-1960s to the mid-1980s. It was a mixed CSF and SSF house. I have many happy memories of that period. Through Sister Gabriel, whose sight was failing, asking for assistance in the garden, I began to get interested in rhododendrons and later camellias. I joined the International Camellia Society, which resulted in a trip to China ten years ago.

What does your 'everyday life' consist of?

I do some habit making and repair, having learned tailoring from Patrick in the 1950s. I do the sacristy work and ring the bells for chapel. And of course, working in the garden.

What are your hopes for C/SSF?

I am hopeful, and I think that the changes that have been made over the last few years will be ok.

Can you recommend a book you have read recently or which has greatly influenced you?

I've enjoyed the reflections in *The green heart of the snowdrop* by Kate McIlhagga (Wild Goose publications). I've been reading from it at the ending of supper, and it has been appreciated by many of our guests.

I also appreciate David Adams' books of prayers. I keep going back to them.

Sr Elizabeth CSF



What drew you to become a Franciscan Sister?

As a tertiary I knew some of the SSF brothers, but the sisters were very hidden. I was unaware of CSF until I was invited to an Open Day at Dalston where I was warmly welcomed by Sister Mary Francis. The relationship with the brothers was important too. When I joined, aged 24, there were only five sisters in the Community – Mother Agnes Mary, Mary Francis, Mary Clare, Veronica, Ann and Lillian Agnes. That was years ago. I was very impressed by the sisters. They showed real humanity, a great sense of humour and were open to anything!

What are two high points of your life in the First Order?

Moving to Compton Durville freed us up. After being largely invisible in London, suddenly we were a visible presence in the local area, and we were enthusiastically welcomed in Bath & Wells Diocese.

For me personally ordination to the priesthood in 1994 was wonderful, but before that going on missions was important. I did 28 in all – not as leader, but sisters had begun to preach which was good. I hated having to knock on doors, but I loved being there when people were friendly. I also really enjoyed getting to know people and building long-term relationships when I was doing parish work at St Mary of Eton, our branch house.

Becoming 'Mother' was a desperate point!

What has been the most significant change during your time in CSF?

From being tiny and inward looking we changed to being 'out there', and getting on with living – able to change at every level.

The change was helped by our going to St. Mary of Eton. I was there for three years with Mary Francis, and then Anne Mary, Mildred and Alison Mary were each there with her turn, so several of us had experienced community life in somewhat different context, even before we moved to Somerset.

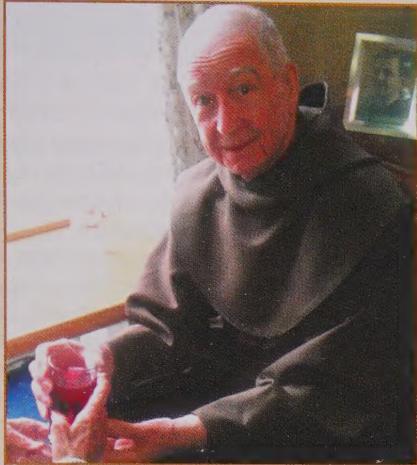
What are your hopes for C/SSF?

I hope there will still be a definite focus for CSF. Now we don't have the house at Compton Durville it's more difficult to achieve that. Even if we are small in number we must remain visible.

term view

Junior First Order members

Br Angelo SSF



What drew you to become a Franciscan Friar?

At the age of thirty, I contracted a serious illness which had me hospitalized for some months, followed by a long period of convalescence and physiotherapy, during which time many of my beliefs of God, his love, and my relationship with him were called into question. During my search for answers to my questions I found out about SSF at Hilfield: followed by a weekend visit. In the following two years I visited frequently: discovering first a new sense of God, and then an entirely different concept of Christian living which I wanted to be a part. This led to entry into the friary on St Mark's Day, 1963.

What are two high points of your life in the First Order?

The first is that of being ordained a priest; the added dimension of ministry has been remarkable, not only by keeping me in a constant state of gratitude but also because of the depth of relationship that has been made possible with those people who have touched my life.

Second were the years I was privileged to minister to people at various stages of HIV and AIDS in San Francisco, together with Sister Ruth CSF, and the hospital staff who did the actual medical nursing.

But these two points in my ministry that I have felt closest to are in his.

What does your 'everyday life' consist of?

My days now include regular Offices and protracted times of conversation; availability to the folk here at the retirement home where I live; an extensive correspondence (thanks to friends who have supplied with stamps!) and on call for services in local parishes, including leading quiet days, Lent/Advent courses and retreats.

What are your hopes for C/SSF?

We will continue to attract men and women who, anchored in the three basics of Prayer, Work and Study, will be at all times available to God – always faithful in prayer, never committing only to one sphere of work, and taking every opportunity to study – but always to respond to the invitations of the Holy Spirit.

What book do you recommend a book you have read recently or which has greatly influenced you?

Books are so 'personal' that I hesitate to recommend, but my present choice is actually a re-reading of 'Seeds of Hope' by Henri Nouwen, which seems to have much to say to many areas of life – whether religious or secular, and is both comforting and challenging.

Sr Gwenfryd Mary CSF



What drew you to become a Franciscan Sister?

Falling in love with the life I saw being lived at Compton Durville. I used to visit Ty Mawr as a student, and when that was unavailable I went to Freeland, where I met a tertiary who recommended Compton Durville. I went for a holiday, and was absolutely bitten. I realised 'This is it'. I tried my vocation as tertiary for two years after that visit, before joining CSF in 1965 aged 26. I was struck by the sisters' sense of humour and compassion, and felt they had their feet on the ground. There was a craziness and sense of fun and joy in the work they were doing – a warmth and spirituality.

What are two high points of your life in the First Order?

My Life Profession at Compton Durville in 1970 has to be one, and I really enjoyed the work at Wellclose House in Birmingham with girls at risk.

But the beginning of my life as a hermit is the most significant. While living in the community house in Bangor Diocese I had met Sisters of the Love of God who were following a hermit vocation, and was very impressed. I had a trial period as a hermit on the Lleyn Peninsula, and later was at Milford Haven for many years. The hiddenness of solitary life is very important to me.

What has been the most significant change during your time in CSF?

The ordination of women priests – I've been very much in favour of that.

CSF has changed too and moved with the times. There's a much wider variety of backgrounds among us, and we don't all speak with Received Pronunciation! We're not "nunny" and more in touch with society and people around us.

For myself, the charismatic movement has been a great help, bringing me into greater freedom and joy. Some of the fruit of that growth can be seen in my art, and the Welsh poetry I write. I see the details of things first – sometimes it takes time to see the whole picture. I've learned that perseverance is very important.

What are your hopes for C/SSF?

That we will continue to move forward and expand, especially with work among the poor and needy. I hope we continue the spiritual journey the way we are doing. It is very precious for me to belong, and I am thankful for the love and understanding I receive.

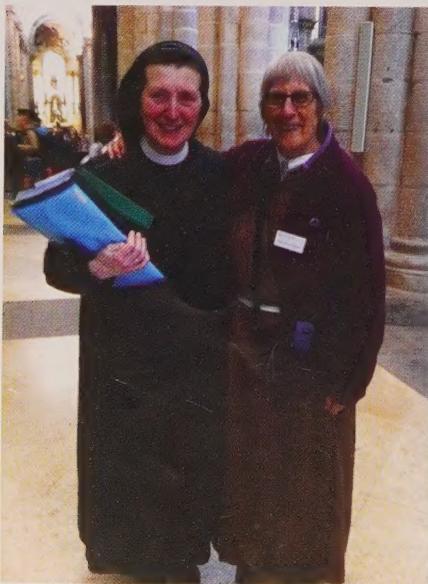
Community Routes

◆◆ A pilgrim in Santiago de Compostela

Joyce was given the opportunity of being on pilgrimage with a group from Southwark Cathedral to Santiago in May 2013, led by the Dean, the Very Revd Andrew Nunn. The day they arrived in this holy place, where the apostle James is buried, about 1100 other pilgrims had their Pilgrimage passport stamped at the Cathedral Pilgrims' Office. It was amazing to think of those numbers arriving each day, almost all in response to faith. At the Pilgrims' Mass she was invited to sit by the Dean within the rails in front of the altar. It was the sublime experience of the pilgrimage for her. After the reading of the Gospel, she and the Dean went to the microphone, where he read the Southwark Invocation to the Apostle and she gave the gift of a box of Mucknell Abbey incense.

After communion, which took some time in a packed cathedral, the men who swing the Botafumeiro appeared, and it was filled with the incense gift. The thurible was raised and swung higher and higher into both transepts, the inferno within it quite visible, an impressive sight as the smoke and smell filled the cathedral. Initially the thurible was introduced to cleanse the building of the smell of the pilgrims. Though not necessary these days, it represented the prayers of thanksgiving of all present, rising with the smoke heavenwards.

The cantor at the Mass was Sr Maria Ascuncion who sang beautifully. She and Joyce's paths crossed after the service when they warmly greeted each other as sister pilgrims.



Joyce with Sr Maria Asuncion, inside the Cathedral of St James, Santiago de Compostela

From the Invocation read by the Dean:

'We believe that the Camino to Santiago is a road to life and a source of goodness and peace in this world. We believe that all who walk the Way are drawn deeper into faith, and come to know our Lord Jesus Christ just as you knew him as his Apostle and friend.'

◆◆ CIR in Poland

Peter and Christine James took part in the biennial CIR (International, Inter-confessional Congress of Religious) held at the Benedictine Monastery at Tyniec near Cracow in Poland. The Congress was attended by nearly 50 members of religious communities from different denominations, from Eastern Orthodox members from Romania to Lutherans from Germany and Switzerland and Roman Catholics from many places, together with a small contingent of Anglicans.

Originally founded in the eleventh century, the Monastery has had a rich history through dissolution in Napoleonic times to re-foundation in 1939. The buildings, on an outcrop of rock overlooking the flood plain of the River Vistula, are a mixture of styles from Romanesque simplicity behind black marble and gold baroque decorations with modern, comfortable guest accommodation. The food was Polish, healthy and excellent. The resident community of monks of a wide range of ages gave us a true Benedictine welcome and we shared their offices of Lauds (in Polish) and Vespers (in Latin). Although the Gregorian chant was beautiful, Peter and Chris James felt glad to still be Franciscans.

The theme of the Congress was 'Seeking Unity on the Banks of the Vistula' and was a mixture of talks in French, German or English with papers translated beforehand into each of the three languages. There were also dialogue groups in each of these three languages where the presentations and other related topics could be discussed. Just as important were the informal opportunities for conversation with the other participants.

A significant part of the Congress was the visit to Auschwitz Birkenau where the participants were split into language groups and given a guided tour of the concentration camps, the sombre and, at times, harrowing site of human suffering and inhuman deeds. The following day, some of the members of the Congress

shared how the Second World War had affected their families. Some had relatives who had been killed in concentration camps, some had first-hand experience of being bombed in Warsaw and some had relatives who had served in the German forces. The time of listening to each other's stories was one of respect and very heartfelt sympathy. Unforgettable was the haunting improvised song which brought together the suffering of so many different peoples in wartime by a Polish sister with Jewish ancestry.

The Congress brought home the fact that, as professed Brothers and Sisters, we have much in common and that work towards Christian Unity is both desirable and necessary. Quoting the words of Dietrich Bonhoeffer from one of the talks, 'Let us hear the all-embracing sound of the world, which invisibly spreads around us, all your children's praise.'



Christine James and Peter with James Puglisi SA, at CIR in Poland.

◆◆ 'Pray at all times'

David Jardine writes about a mission to Colombia in March, 2013 with members of the team from Divine Healing Ministries.

When we left Belfast on this latest mission to Colombia we knew that we were surrounded by a volume of prayer. What a difference that makes! Right from the beginning good things began to happen. While we were waiting for the plane to Miami we met the singer Lulu, who was on the same flight. We had a long conversation with her about faith, forgiveness, healing and love. We offered to say a prayer with her, and right there in a public place she said 'I would love you to say a prayer.' When we finished she said 'Hallelujah! Thank you, Jesus.'



David Jardine and the Divine Healing Ministries team with Lulu, at Belfast airport.

That incident seemed to set the tone for the whole mission in Colombia. In a country where there is potential for things not to go right everything seemed to go very smoothly. Every time we spoke we got a great anointing of the Holy Spirit. There were two or three engagements every day, and that involved praying with sometimes hundreds of people. One of the team, Philip McKee, has a gift for praying with people on the street. On one

occasion, while the rest of us were inside a church speaking and praying with people he went outside. After a couple of hours he came back and told us he had prayed with at least forty people. Only three had turned him down.

Those of us who have been to Colombia a number of times before were particularly pleased to see that violence is not as bad as it was. Things are settling and there is still a spiritual vitality amongst the people. *Que Dios siga bendiciendo el pais la gente de Colombia!*

◆◆ Round up

At the SSF Francistide Chapter, **Peter** was elected to Life Profession, **Christopher Martin** and **Joseph Emmanuel** to First Profession, and **John** was elected



SSF and friends were again at the Greenbelt Festival. Anglican Religious Communities had a stall which Vaughan was helping with when Bishop Michael Perham dropped in.

Guardian of Alnmouth Friary. **Jason Robert** moved to Glasshampton in October.

A video, 'The Anglican Franciscan Way', has been produced about our life and can be viewed on the provincial website - click on 'Our Calling' for the link. A shorter version is available on YouTube and on the provincial Facebook page. [f](#)

◆◆ Lord, Bless this ground/house/garden/meeting

1. The ground-breaking ceremony for the Korean CSF sisters' long awaited convent at Il-Seon-Ri, near Gumi, took place on August 8th, during Sue's pastoral visit as Minister Provincial. Bishop Onesimus Park, Bishop of Busan, who is the sisters' diocesan bishop and their Bishop Protector, led the service. About 40 people braved the unusually hot weather to attend the celebration, and all shared a delicious lunch afterwards.
2. St Anthony's Friary, Newcastle, was blessed by Bishop Martin Wharton, Bishop of Newcastle, on September 15th.
3. The Canticle Garden at Hilfield, designed by Chantal Thornbury, who explained it to the gathering at the Stigmata Festival, was blessed by Bishop Graham Kings, Bishop of Sherborne.
4. The First Order Ministers' Meeting took place from August 12th - 20th, at SungKongHoe University, Seoul, which began its life as the Anglican Seminary in Korea, and still includes a school of theology. The offices were prayed in one of the two chapels on site.



Franciscans in Doncaster

Malcolm SSF

On Sunday 30th June, 2013, the brothers said a sad farewell to the church family at St. Peter's, Bentley as well as to our many friends, some of whom had travelled a good way to be with us. We celebrated the Eucharist together and then had a party of thanksgiving, a party to say thank you for the countless blessings received during our years together.

As you may imagine it was a very moving occasion, tears of farewell were shed, but there was much laughter and rejoicing as well. The brothers have been greatly blessed over ten years by loving and generous folk who have their hearts set on God and his Kingdom.

How quickly the years have passed. We began our ministry and presence there on the 22nd May, 2003. At the invitation of

the former Bishop of Sheffield, Jack Nicholls, Brother Malcolm was instituted as vicar of St. Peter's, together with Brother Paul Anthony who was licensed to share the ministry with Malcolm. We had moved into the Vicarage a couple of weeks before and had received a wonderful Yorkshire welcome. It was certainly going to be a challenge, there was so much to learn, we felt more 'willing than able', but were confident in the love and grace of God to make up for our shortcomings and lack of experience. We could not have even begun without the love and support that we received from the church family. Establishing a new Franciscan presence is a real privilege as well as a responsibility and we look back on those early days with a particular fondness. Bentley had never seen friars before but people soon got accustomed to our brown habits, as with every new venture there were a lot of questions to be answered: 'who were the brothers? What was their purpose for being in Bentley?' Yes, it was exciting and exhausting too, meeting new people, doing things for the first time!

Parish ministry offers a rich variety and there is a constant call on one's time. As Franciscans our priority is to a life of union with God through prayer and the community life, out of these two comes our ministry to others. It was not always easy to get the balance right. We tried to keep an open house where all could feel welcome and accepted and it was good that so many came to see the Vicarage as a place where they felt

loved and cared for.

St. Peter's has always had strong links with the local community. Next to the church is the community hall, which is maintained by the church. Each day it is used for a variety of activities and provides a much needed resource in an area where resources are often scarce. South Yorkshire folk are fine and proud people and it was a great blessing to get to know so many and be involved in their lives.

Although we were two brothers in the beginning, over the years a number of brothers shared in the life and ministry of the friary. Benjamin, who though living and working in Birmingham, came to share our life at the week-ends. Nathanael, John, Benedict, Gerardo, Barnabas Francis and Cristian Michael – all of them contributed their many gifts and talents, their selves, to our Franciscan presence and are remembered with gratitude.

Those of you who are regular readers of *franciscan* will remember that Brother Paul Anthony died on Christmas Eve 2010, after a long illness. Paul was an inspiration to us all and a greatly loved brother and friend to many. The people of Bentley will never forget him and his rich ministry among them.

St. Peter's is a truly Christian family where the Kingdom values of love, forgiveness and justice are lived out day by day. We thank God for the wonderful opportunity that he gave us to share with them in the abundance of his unconditional love.

In conclusion I would like to end with a prayer that we often prayed at St. Peter's. For me it sums up the essence of gospel living:

Heavenly Father,
draw us nearer to yourself
that we may know your will;
Loving Lord Jesus, fill us with all joy and
peace
that we may respond to your call;
Holy Spirit, inspire us that we may
celebrate our faith
And give glory to you, God, ever blessed
Trinity,
Now and forever. Amen. *f*



At the end of the final Eucharist In St Peter's Church, Malcolm with the church wardens: Benedict is in the background. At the reception, Malcolm with parishioners, and in the vestry before the service, Cristian Michael with Bob Ferris. A touch of Yorkshire humour and skill: the piano is a cake, and the scarf and 'drinks' are edible, too!



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♦ ♦ ♦

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Hilfield Friary 2014

For further information and for the programme of events, see www.hilfieldfriary.org.uk

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Reviews

Prices given are usually the standard price, and are for books. Many books are also available as e-books, which readers can check if the book review arouses their interest.

Thomas O'Loughlin

**Making the Most of the Lectionary:
A User's guide**

**ISBN: 9780 2810 6587 5
SPCK, 2012, 176pp, £12.99**

Brothers and sisters who know Professor O'Loughlin from Formation Studies at Arkley Convent are familiar with how his engaging style gets us all hooked, even as he challenges cherished assumptions and stirs up reactions in his provocative questioning about much his audience thought they could take for granted. In this book too he is not afraid to ask some basic questions: Why do we read the scriptures at all, in Church? What is a Gospel? Why bother with the Old Testament? Is a lectionary a good idea?

His message however is predominantly a positive one. Father Tom prioritises *hearing the performance* of the scriptures (as originally intended) over following them in a Bible or pew sheet, and this is a book about the predominantly common cycle of principal readings *heard* each Sunday by Roman Catholics, Anglicans and Christians of most mainline Western churches. That reality represents a remarkable ecumenical achievement and 'the great undiscovered masterpiece of modern Christian liturgy', a lectionary that achieves a liturgical celebration alongside didactic instruction in a way that has not existed in Western Christianity since the fifth or sixth century.

No lectionary is perfect, and different priorities and solutions to technical problems lie behind the fact that what we now use is a *family* of three closely related lectionaries (our own *Common Worship Lectionary* being one of them) but this book will help readers, preachers and listeners alike to get beyond a sense of the lectionary as just a 'convenient album of biblical texts' to a deeper appreciation of the subtleties of why we hear what we hear when we hear it as 'the people of the covenant established by Jesus... gather as a church to express this relationship in the meal of blessing and thanking the Father... and recall the events that established it.'

Desmond Alban SSF

Jose A. Pagola

Jesus: An Historical Approximation

ISBN: 9781 9349 9609 6

Convivium-Kyrios, 2012, 557pp, £25 00

This book first appeared in Spain in 2007. Two years later an English translation by Margaret Wilde came out in the USA. These words appear in the epilogue,

which should be read before starting at page 15, the Preface:-

'What joy it would bring to people, to be able to discern the features of the true God in Jesus! How brightly their faith would burn, if they could see with new eyes the face of God incarnate in Jesus! If there is a God, he is like Jesus'.

So here is a book written with the express intention of giving the readers those 'new eyes'. It comes from a Spanish catholic priest with very solid credentials, studies in Rome and Jerusalem, teaching and administrative posts in his diocese, and throughout a big part in 'the quest for the historical Jesus'. It was written in plain Spanish, and is translated into plain English.

Pagola does not pretend to have given us a biography of Jesus. He uses the evidence – the bible, historical sources (scanty), the Qumran manuscripts, the politics and economics of Galilee in the early decades of the first century – archaeology, sociology, the Judaism of temple and of synagogue – all that made up the context of the life and death of Jesus. The modern biographer can be thought of as a photographer (not fair, really). Pagola is an artist.

His early chapters depict Galilee in the time of Jesus' birth, childhood, and life in Nazareth, and then follow aspects of his association with John the Baptist, his itinerant ministry among the deprived and oppressed peasantry and fisher folk who for him were first in the Father's kingdom. He attracted followers, some of whom, men and women, accompanied him and were taught intensively by him. His constant and public advocacy of the outcast, his witness to God's love, his rejection of the religion of the temple, earn him a death sentence from Pilate and execution according to the savage laws of Rome: death by crucifixion.

This is not the end; Pagola's treatment of the sequel to the horrors of 7th April, 30 AD, is breath-taking, convincing, edifying and spirit filled. It succeeds in giving us those new eyes.

Anselm, SSF

Alan Wilkinson

One Foot in Eden

ISBN: 0902 834 304.

Mirfield Publications, 2011, £9.99

The Church History paper in the old General Ordination Examination once included the question, 'What do we learn about the church in England from the nineteenth century novel?' – a gift to any candidate who enjoyed Victorian fiction. Anyone faced with a similar question about the church in England during the twentieth century would find Alan Wilkinson's novel a mine of information.

One Foot in Eden is the story of a young priest who left his first curacy in London to join a religious community. This was something his parents did not understand. And Peter and his cousin Sally were very fond of each other. But he pursued his

vocation. Eventually he became superior of his community and was then incumbent of the tough Leeds parish for which the brothers were responsible.

The community and the people in the story are entirely fictitious. But the author writes from his knowledge of Cambridge, Mirfield and SSF and from his experience as a pastor and teacher. Meeting people like Charles Jenkinson (a dynamic, eccentric and compassionate priest whose political activity in the 1920s changed the face of a notorious slum in Leeds), Tubby Clayton, Michael Ramsey, John Robinson and David Jenkins, may assure the reader that the background of the story is a fair picture of the twentieth century church: indeed some will recognize our own Br Barnabas on page 11. Peter has to face the demands which religious vows make and how they affect our choices and our family and personal relationships.

While this novel assumes some knowledge of what goes on in church, it gives a clear account of the religious life and its place in the Christian life. I liked particularly the wise and encouraging confessor in Chapter 6.

Reginald SSF.

Ben Quash
Abiding

The Archbishop of Canterbury's Lent Book 2013

ISBN: 9781 4411 5111 7

Bloomsbury, 2012, 249pp, £10.00

Lent 2013 is history. Ben Quash's book abides. Its message – reminiscent of Vanstone's *The Stature of Waiting*, is a constant, timeless.

This is a book – and yet, it is not a book. An attempt to read it as such leaves the reader with an attack of acute mental indigestion. It calls for a slow perusal, certainly not more than a chapter at a time, if not a page.

From the back cover: 'Drawing on the wisdom and imagery of modern fiction, film and art, as well as key figures in the classical Christian tradition, Quash skilfully and creatively explores the implications that "abiding" has for our bodies and minds, our relationships and communities, and our spiritual lives.'

Anselm SSF

Andrew Walker
On Retreat – A Lenten Journey
The Mowbray Lent Book 2012

ISBN: 9780 8264 3169 1

Continuum, £9.99, 102pp, £17.99

Though nominated for Lent, this book would be helpful for a retreat at any time as it speaks of our own humanity and life, and of our encounter with God in Jesus.

The book is not cumbersome, an easy one to take about or to leave in a useful space at hand if the retreat is at home where there are necessary tasks. Taking different aspects of human life, Walker

anks each first with the sadder, and then with the more productive, possibilities. He writes colloquially, conversationally, and what he says is easy to absorb and to relate to in a personal way.

There are one or two grammatical blunders in the book; and his use of the terms 'meditation' and 'contemplation' does not quite accord with what I would use, but these are minor details in a most useful book.

Elizabeth CSF

Keith Hebden
Seeking Justice:
The Radical Compassion of Jesus
 ISBN: 9781780996882
Circle Books, 2013, 168pp, £11.99

Revd Dr Keith Hebden is a Church of England priest and an activist committed to continued experiments in non-violent resistance and community organising. He works as a pioneer minister in the deanery of Mansfield.

This book blends theory and action. Keith Hebden draws on biblical, economic, historical, political and sociological scholarship, but his purpose is to encourage, enable and equip people to action, seeking justice through the radical compassion of Jesus. Each chapter ends with suggestions for building a compassionate community of resistance where readers are, including activities for small groups and further reading and inviting response to the website: www.compassionistas.net.

There are striking readings of the parables of the Prodigal Son and the Mustard Seed, of Matthew 5 and Romans 13. Theory and analysis are earthed in true stories about the author, such as his road rage provoked by being cut up on the motorway, being threatened by an aggressive neighbour in the East End, protest against a proposed library closure in his Gloucester parish, being dragged out of Gloucester Cathedral after interrupting a Zionist preacher there,

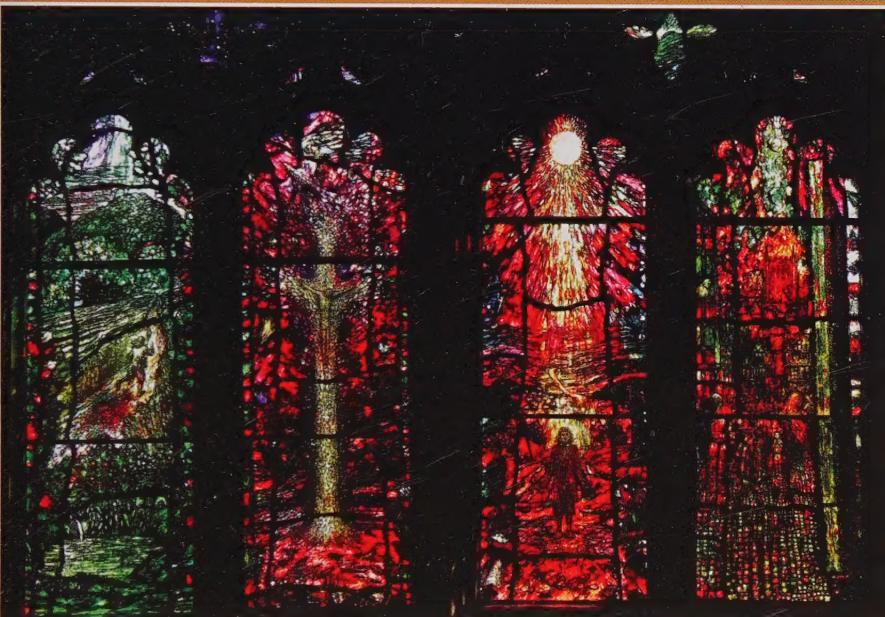
realising his own personal prejudices, his family life and arrests by police.

Insisting that non-violent resistance is not passive acceptance, Hebden describes three common responses to aggression (hedgehog; teddy bear; rhinoceros) and shows how young children often use the tactics of non-violent resistance when dealing with their stronger parents.

Examples of effective non-violent resistance are given from the little known campaigns against Nazi policies in Hitler's Germany and occupied Europe in World War II, and from the UK today: the East London Community Organisation, the Trident Ploughshares Movement, the London Catholic Workers and the think-tank Ekklesia.

This book is a stimulating and exciting read, but it will have failed if it does not prompt each reader to seek justice as part of a community following the radical compassion of Jesus.

*Cecil King
 Salisbury*



Pilgrimage

Anselm SSF

A new disciple of Thomas Traherne (1637-1674) puts Hereford on his list of 'must go to' places. Traherne's remains lie in Teddington, but his origins and ministry were in Hereford. In the cathedral are the recent (2007) memorial windows by Tom Denny reproduced above. A friend who lives in the city meets the train and leads me by way of its various delights to the remote side chapel on the south of the cathedral lit by four small lights, now resplendent, thanks to winter sunshine, with a visual representation of Traherne's meditations and verse.

Back to the station and a parting of the ways, back to Glasshampton where the Christmas decorations are tidied away (it's Twelfth Night). I replace mine with the picture post card, not to be tidied away.

I was introduced to Traherne at a meeting of Worcester Retired Clergy, addressed by Dr. Denise Inge who is a leading interpreter of Traherne to twenty-first century students. Later, reading her book (*Wanting Like a God, Desire and Freedom in Thomas Traherne*, SCM Press, 2009) I was changed from someone vaguely aware of 'Centuries of Meditations', into the 'new disciple of Thomas Traherne' who undertook the Hereford pilgrimage and perhaps one day will visit the reading desk in Teddington church beneath which he rests.

Son of a Hereford shoemaker, he showed early promise and at 16 went to Brasenose College, Oxford where he graduated at 19. His childhood was overshadowed by the Civil War during which Hereford was briefly besieged. His time at Oxford was during the Commonwealth and a puritan regime at Brasenose, his early parish ministry at Credenhill without episcopal ordination.

At the restoration of the monarchy (1660) he sought ordination, at the age of 23. There followed 14 years of obscure ministry in the village, some work at the cathedral, and latterly some time as household chaplain to a London notable whose country house was at Teddington. Outwardly, there is nothing here to attract the attention of posterity. He wrote much, but published little. At his death his writings nearly all joined him in obscurity, some for centuries. From the late nineteenth century, however, there have been discoveries, culminating in 1997. Manuscripts have appeared on bookstalls in the street, even on a bonfire in a scrapyard – an accumulation sufficient to raise Traherne from the status of a minor mystical poet to that of a theologian of his time engaged in the controversies of a contentious age, equipped with encyclopaedic knowledge derived from reading in philosophy, science, scripture, the fathers of the church, and with a passion to communicate, in verse and in prose of a beauty worthy of his message.

How does all this concern readers of franciscan? Here is a rich and largely unexplored seam waiting to be mined by those serious about spiritual reading, meditation, theological thinking. If you are thirsting for felicity, try Traherne!

Further reading

The Golden Age of Spiritual Writing. *Thomas Traherne: Poetry and Prose*, selected and introduced by Denise Inge. SPCK, 2002.

Happiness and holiness: Thomas Traherne and his writings, edited by Denise Inge. Canterbury Press, 2008

Thomas Traherne: Select meditations, edited with an introduction by Julia J. Smith. Carcanet in association with the Dean and Chapter of Hereford, 1997 f

Andrew SSF

Samuel SSF

The majority of the congregation for Andrew's funeral isn't here today – his friends and colleagues in Papua New Guinea with whom he lived and worked for over fifty years: the people he has treated as 'Doctor Brother Andrew', the children, students and families he has supported and encouraged, the people in the mental health service he helped to set up, the Visitation Sisters at Popondetta whom he guided, and the prisoners for whom he stood up in court. All in all, it would be a huge congregation, many themselves now departed, who would be here with us in respect and gratitude for Br Andrew SSF.

Of those present in the flesh in this chapel only a few knew Andrew in PNG: Br Giles, Tim Biles, Margaret Robinson, Br Hugh and, very briefly, myself. Most of us here have known Andrew only through his occasional visits home on furlough, or over the past five years since he has been based, first in Plaistow, and then more recently here at Hilfield. These five years haven't been an easy time for Andrew – or for us! Added to his difficulty as a doctor of accepting his own need for care has been Andrew's huge sense of loss of his work and ministry in PNG, the country which he loved and to which he has given

franciscan

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Music for the Liturgy

Settings of the Psalms and Canticles, edited by Br Reginald SSF and suitable for small groups to sing, are available on:

[www.franciscans.org.uk/resources / music resources](http://www.franciscans.org.uk/resources/music-resources)

Also included are Responsorial Psalms for Festivals and a 3-year cycle for Sundays and simple Mass settings by Br Christian and Br Reginald.

so much of his life. Andrew's difficulty in coping with 'retirement' and displacement did have its humorous side in which his innate wit won through. I'm thinking particularly of his dress sense – those layers upon layers of clothes, often put on back to front or inside out, sometimes incorporating part of his habit, were a kind of witty jibe, not just at the English weather to which he never re-acclimatised, but also at his 'enforced' presence here at Hilfield. In effect he was

*Brother Andrew SSF
died on 2 August 2013,
and his funeral Mass was
held at Hilfield Friary.
He was aged 85 years and
was in the fifty-ninth year
of his profession in vows.*

saying, 'I'm just not going to fit in'.

I want to mention two people who have been really important for Andrew's care here at the Friary. Br Hugh has given hours and hours each week of sensitive, patient, generous attention: cleaning his room (admittedly, to his own low standard of cleaning!), fetching him for meals and sometimes fetching meals to him, reading to him in the evenings, and inventing outings – to Cerne Abbas for tea, to Portland Bill to see the sea, or, most exciting of all, surrounded in the car by plastic bottles, to the recycling tip in Sherborne. And then, Mike Oram, coming in each week to bake bread, to keep an eye on the water and sewage plants, and to spend time, a lot of time, with Andrew. Mike has been one of the few people who was able to engage with Andrew intellectually and to recognise and draw out from him his humour and sharp insight. We owe thanks to both of these – and to Br Edmund in Plaistow during Andrew's first year back from PNG – for their love and care.

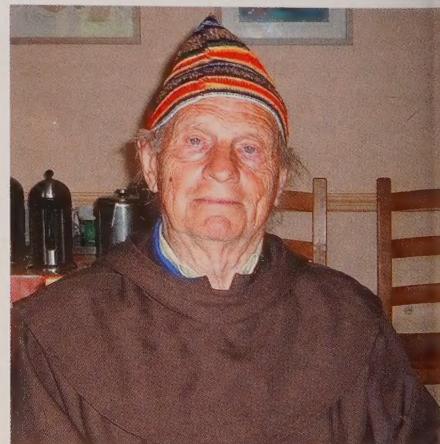
Although it hasn't been easy, Andrew's presence here at Hilfield Friary has been important for all of us - I would even say a 'blessing'. Community life is not about living just with the people we find easy to get on with, people like us whom we like, people who are accommodating – a Mary Poppins kind of show. Authentic communities have in them people who are hurt, angry, awkward and wounded – in fact, there's a bit of that in each one of us. Andrew's presence among us has touched on our own frustration, powerlessness and vulnerability, and by the grace of God through Andrew we've learnt something about patience,

forbearance, compassion and mercy – and how to laugh at it all.

And now our Brother Andrew has come to meet 'Sister Death' from whom no-one alive can flee, and who, said St Francis, is to be welcomed and embraced as part of God's loving purpose for each one of us and for all his creation. A visitor who was with us soon after we heard that Andrew had died in Dorchester Hospital said to me, 'Well, he has gone to a better place'. The problem is that the only 'better place' that Andrew would have wanted to go, was back to PNG! The sentiment was kindly meant, but in fact going to a better place is not the Christian hope of what will happen to us when we die. The Christian hope is centred around those words of Jesus which we've heard in the gospel reading in this Mass: '*This is indeed the will of my Father that all who see the Son of Man and believe in him may have eternal life; and I will raise them up on the last day.*' We believe in God who raises up, who raises up all that bears the image of Christ and shares the life of Christ; who raises us up from death to life.

In a very real sense for us as Christians our dying starts at our baptism when we begin to share both the dying and the risen life of Jesus. And our Christian hope is that at the last we will be raised up to share fully in the beauty, the mercy, the compassion, the wisdom and the glory that the Son and the Holy Spirit share with the Father. Our faith is that the only 'better place' to which Andrew is going is within the life of the Blessed Trinity. It's this Trinitarian 'raising up' from death to life that we are celebrating in this Requiem Mass, and it's to the God who raises up that we commend Andrew today.

Such raising up from death to life doesn't do away with all the quirkiness or awkwardness of our human lives, nor does it just send them to a better place. Rather, God's raising up forgives, redeems, heals and transforms so that we share and reflect God's glory. So when, by God's mercy and grace, we too are raised up at the last and share fully in God's life – which is his promise to us in Jesus – then I'll bet you anything that we'll meet Andrew and *he'll still be wearing that funny woollen hat!*



Andrew SSF